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TAGS: MOPS PGOV PHUM PTER I2
SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 16 MCNS -- REINSTITUTING CENTRALIZED
CONTROL OVER PROVINCES AND SECURITY FORCES

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia A. Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: The September 16 Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) was dominated by discussions about partially reinstituting centralized governmental control over provincial security organizations and increasing governmental control over disparate security units like Facility Protective Services (FPS) and Personal Security Details (PSD). Starting in Mosul and soon to come to Anbar, the central government will establish provincial operational command centers with a regional military commander appointed by the Prime Minister. The MCNS also agreed to place most FPS units into their own directorate within the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and better coordinate the use of Ministry of Defense PSDs. National Security Advisor (NSA) Rubaie also confirmed October 29 as the date when Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) will occur in Karbala Province. END SUMMARY.

Centralizing Provincial Command and Control

¶2. (S) The most crucial issue discussed during the September 16 MCNS was the Provincial Operational Command Center proposed for Mosul. Minister of Defense (MOD) Abdul Qadr spoke forcefully about the need to get this center up and running as soon as possible. He emphasized how it would unite all provincial security forces (primarily police units) with national military forces also assigned to the region. Additionally, he reminded the MCNS that a battalion-sized Emergency Response Unit (ERU) would be assigned to this center as its quick reaction force during day-to-day operations. MOD Qadr also discussed plans to put a similar command center in Anbar province. PM Maliki agreed to both but he urged completion of the Mosul command center first because the deteriorating Mosul security situation "did not look promising."

¶3. (S) PM Maliki also urged the appointment of a competent military commander for the Mosul center but this ultimately led to an uncomfortable exchange between Iraqi Commander of Joint Forces Babakir and the Minister of Defense. Babakir initially told PM Maliki that General Othman, commander of the 3rd Division Iraqi Army (IA), was his man for the job, only to be overruled by MOD Qadr who said emphatically that no choice had yet been made. A tit-for-tat discussion ensued about coordination problems between their respective headquarters while the Prime Minister looked on. A somewhat exasperated Maliki told the two of them to work it out privately and report back to him with their choice. Deputy MNF-I Commanding General Rollo stated he was interested in

how the command and control will work for these operational commands. He requested discussions between MNF-I and the MOD/Iraqi Joint Forces Commander about how the future operational commands will be established.

¶4. (S) When the Minister of Interior (MOI) proposed a tribal/sheik awakening movement in the Mosul area similar to that in Anbar, the somewhat chastised General Babakir became re-energized and strongly objected to this proposal. He emphasized that Mosul was very different from Anbar, particularly because the northern tribal sheiks had no control over the population, unlike their western counterparts. Further, since most of the sheiks near Mosul were heavily involved in illegal activities, the vetting process needed to be rigorous and the potential security benefits for both the MOD and MOI had to clearly outweigh the risks. PM Maliki responded that it was important to bring back the Mosul tribes. Babakir agreed that they should pursue educational and similar governmental integration programs but he cautioned against trusting any sheik leaders there. (Note: General Babakir is a Kurd who spends as much time as possible at his house in Dahuk, less than 40 miles north of Mosul. End note.)

Centralizing Control over Private/Public Security Forces

¶5. (S) In an almost mind-numbing discussion about the myriad of government security forces spread throughout almost every one of the thirty-four ministries, Minister of the Interior al-Bowani proposed putting all of them into a single directorate within MOI. Although some ministers -- including

BAGHDAD 00003134 002 OF 002

MOD Qadr -- initially objected, they were quickly overruled by PM Maliki. He complained that many of these ministerial FPS units were full of "ghost employees" whose bosses were milking the government out of money. He said he liked the idea of organizing "1000 useless FPS employees into an MOI directorate of 300 hard workers." When Minister of Justice (MOJ) al-Shibli suggested that this required a parliamentary decree, Finance Minister Jabr scoffed and said he would simply transfer all FPS payment funds to the MOI on January 1, saying this would effectively make the MOI in charge -- whether or not the parliament agreed. MOJ al-Shibli continued to object and PM Maliki directed formation of a subcommittee to look into the issue and report back to the MCNS.

¶6. (S) An almost identical discussion followed concerning the personal protective services which are provided by the Ministry of Defense for other government ministers and parliamentarians. MOD Qabr asserted that the requirements for personal security personnel were growing exponentially and sarcastically added that most of his military forces would soon be in the personal protection business for ministers and parliamentarians. But when MOI al-Bowani described a draft directive to put these services under the MOI for pay purposes, Qabr objected. A protracted and somewhat acrimonious discussion about administrative procedures followed. When the dust settled, they agreed on the need for better control of these security forces but disagreed on the auditing methodology for determining personnel requirements. PM Maliki directed NSA Rubaie, MOD Qabr, and MOI al-Bowani to meet and agree on a common personnel standard. Somewhere in the middle of this chaotic discussion, the MCNS members suddenly switched gears and began debating a proposal to strip the parliament of its MOD protection services. They proposed substituting it with a reimbursement plan for purchasing their own private protective services. That plan was tabled for additional study.

Karbala PIC Delay

¶ 7. (S) NSA Rubaie confirmed the MCNS decision to delay the Karbala Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) until October 29. He cited several reasons including time for the new Iraqi military commander to assess the situation on the ground, celebration of Ramadan, and review of the lessons learned about the violence at the Shia shrines in late August.

Comment

¶ 8. (S) This MCNS nearly became one of those sausage-making meetings where it wasn't particularly appetizing to watch senior Iraqi ministerial decision-making. But it was not as chaotic as it seemed. The Maliki government appears to be in general agreement about reasserting its centralized control over security in a variety of venues. As far as the provincial security is concerned, there appears to be a national government push-back against giving the provincial governor and local police a majority stake over security issues; the national government wants to exercise an increasingly strong role. These provincial operational command centers -- with their Baghdad appointed military commanders -- are a step in that direction. So is the effort to pull the disparate FPS units out of their respective ministries and put them inside a single MOI directorate. This is one step that may actually improve the overall security posture of the country. But in a government still boycotted by the major Sunni parties and a new split-up of the Shia coalition, this tendency to move security decisions back to Baghdad could also lead to increasing tensions beyond those normally found between any national capital and its outlying provinces. END COMMENT.

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